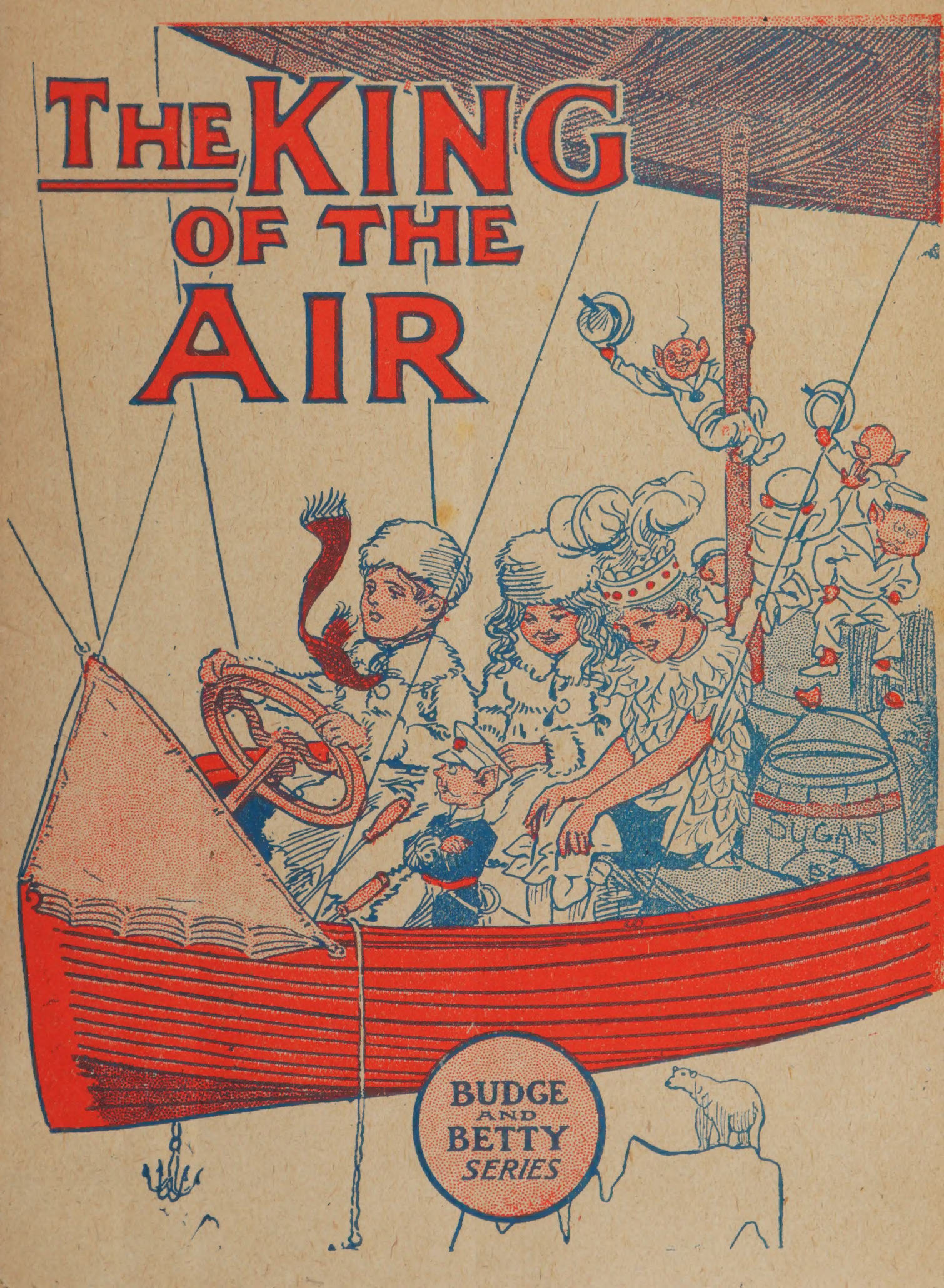
THE KING OF THE AIR



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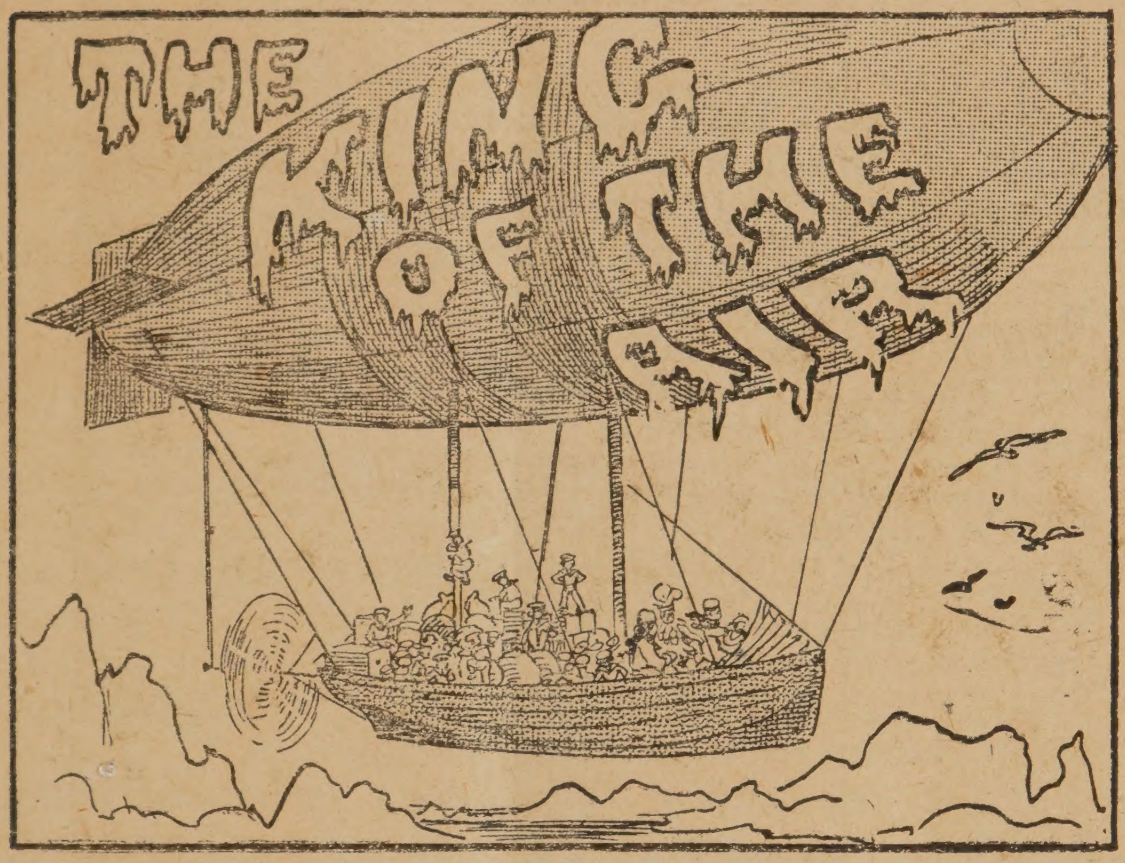


BUDGE and Betty Browne tried to comfort each other with hopeful words, although in their hearts they felt that all hope had fled.

Surely no two children in all the world had ever found themselves in such a terrible fix!

"It was all my fault, Betty," the little Boy Scout said. "If I had not gone into the park at midnight, I should not have met the fairy Prince. And I should not have lent him my little 'Saucy Jane' for him to make it into a big ship, that would sail to the North Pole."

"But you couldn't refuse to help Prince Zoolog to find his mother, the Queen of the Animals," replied Betty. "You simply couldn't do it. You are far too kind-hearted."

"I shouldn't have come myself, if I had known as much as I know now," said Budge. "You see, it is those miserable animals who have rebelled

against the Queen, who have upset the apple cart."

"Oh! but it isn't," protested Betty. "It is the King of the Northern Blast, who wrecked the 'Saucy Jane,' and he is not an animal."

"He's worse," grumbled Budge. "He has dished us completely. Here we are at the North Pole, more than 3,000 miles from home, and almost certain to be frozen to death, when we've eaten up our provisions."

"Did you say 3,000 miles?" asked Betty, her voice a little horrified.

Budge did not answer the question. His face had suddenly lighted up, as if a brilliant idea had struck him.

"Oh! here is the Prince," he cried. "You see how I'll buck him up in less than no time."

Prince Zoolog was dressed just as he was when Budge first saw him. The green leaves of his tunic shone as brightly as if they still grew on a tree; the fox-glove blossom stockings were as pink as ever; the feathers in his cap were still unruffled.

But the face of the Prince wore a troubled look, and he had not a smile even for Betty, as he joined the twins.

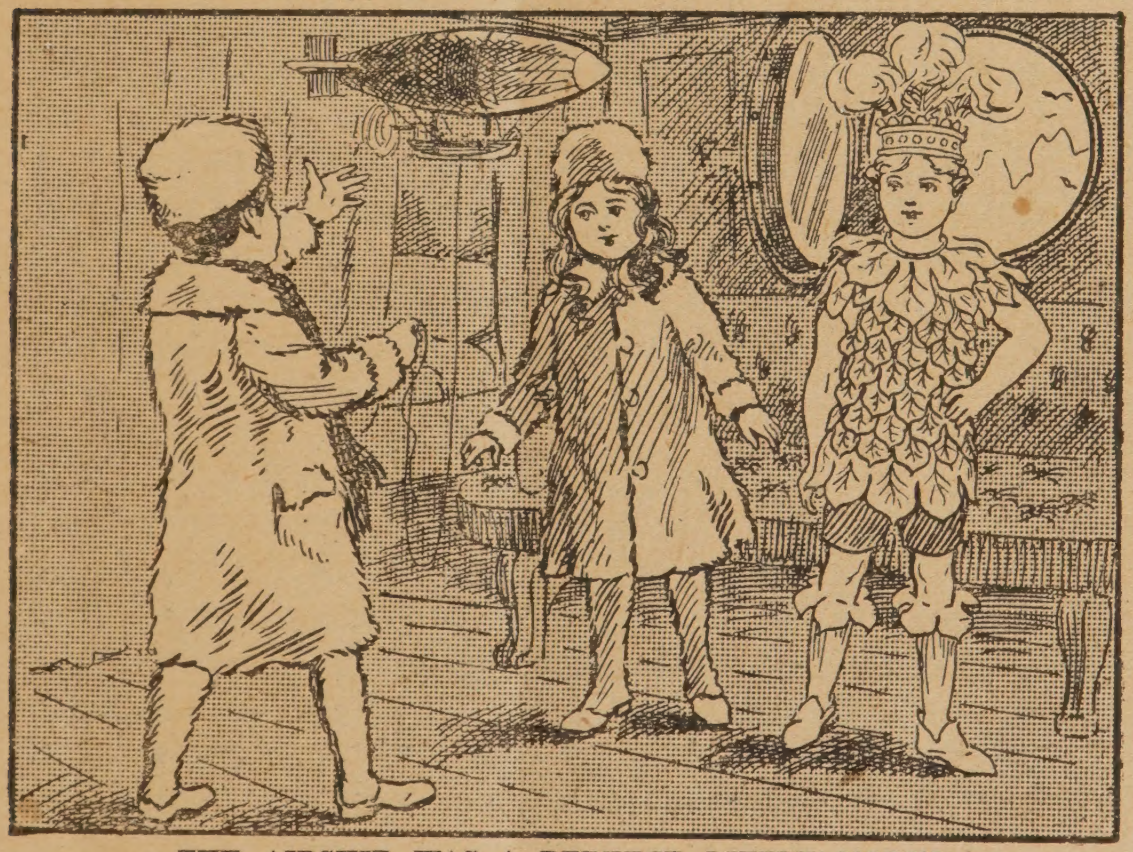
"We've perhaps been worrying ourselves for nothing, your royal Highness," said Budge. "It is true that the 'Saucy Jane' can no longer be of service, but in my cabin there are two articles that may come to our aid."

The Prince did not interrupt; he only looked from Budge to Betty, and then back to the speaker.

"If we cannot leave the North Pole by water," continued Budge, "we must travel by air. My little airship, the 'King of the Air,' will be just the ticket. I've got an aeroplane, too, but I think the airship will be safer."

Betty clapped her hands, for she realised better than the Prince, that there was a way of escape from this frozen world.

Although the keel of the "Saucy Jane" was broken completely off, she still remained upright in the ice. Of course, when the ice moved, she would fill and sink like a stone; but at present it was safe to use the ship for shelter, while the elf sailors unloaded her and put all the stores under canvas.



THE AIRSHIP WAS A PERFECT LITTLE MODEL.

Prince Zoolog and the twins now went into Budge's cabin, where Budge explained to the fairy boy all about the toy airship. It was a perfect little model with a cigar-shaped gas-bag, from which was suspended a car, in which was a tiny engine worked by a strong spring. It sailed about the cabin splendidly.

the Prince. "One can never tell, but it may come in useful one of these fine days."

The Prince only smiled, for he really did not understand the use of a pistol, but very shortly he would be very pleased that Budge had not forgotten it.

Well, the moment for ascending had come. It

THE ELF SKIPPER STEERED SPLENDIDLY.

needed all the strength of most of the elves to wind up the spring, which was now enormously strong. The Prince, the twins, and the elves clambered into the car, and of course Tip and Fluffy were not forgotten. The Prince touched the gas-bag with his ring, and as soon as it attained the proper size, the airship rose up from the ice. The elves cheered loudly, and Prince Zoolog smiled fondly at Budge,

who sat so importantly at the steering wheel, with the elf captain by his side.

"Your brother is splendid," said the Prince to Betty. "I shall never be able to repay him for all that he has done for me."

Betty only nodded her head. She was, indeed, very proud of Budge, who had done all that was possible to get them out of this frozen world, where the King of the Northern Blast had hoped to have them at his mercy.

The airship engine answered every turn of the wheel. The elf skipper scarcely ever took his eyes off Budge, and he kept asking all kinds of questions. The result was that in a few hours' time, the sharp little fellow knew how to handle the airship, quite as well as he had known how to sail the "Saucy Jane." He steered the "King of the Air" splendidly. For this Budge was very thankful. At first it was pleasant to think that all depended upon him; but steering was tiring work, and it was a comfort for him to have somebody to share the duty.

Budge soon found out that something had been forgotten, notwithstanding their care. The airship had no compass! The elf skipper proposed to go back to obtain the one left on the "Saucy Jane," but Budge pointed out that it would be difficult to travel in the teeth of the east wind that had carried them from the North Pole. They would have to trust to luck, and guide themselves by the sun by day and the stars by night.

For two days the airship sailed majestically along, well up above what seemed to be the unending ice and snow. But at last from the car could be seen a vast stretch of water that was full of icebergs, which, with every heave of the waves, bumped and ground against each other, with a

BUDGE DIRECTED THE FIRING.

broke off a piece of ice almost as big as a house.

A few minutes later the berg appeared as if it were struck by an earthquake, for several of the whales had got underneath the ice and were trying to toss it into the air. At the same time the remainder of the creatures were breaking off further huge lumps, that would soon leave nothing to support the airship.

The feelings of the Prince and the twins can easily be imagined. They had never been in such danger. This attack surely meant the end—the end for them of all things. It seemed as if nothing less than a miracle could save them—and a miracle was not likely to happen.

The fairy Prince rubbed his greenstone ring in the hope that it would summon some kind friends to their aid; but even at the best, it was doubtful if any help could arrive in time.

But if fairy magic could not aid them, Budge's human brain could.

"Eureka! I've got a plan," he cried, as he took his air pistol from his pocket.

"Quick, your royal Highness," he cried. "Please touch this with your redstone ring, and we shall have something that will punish these rebels in a way they little think."

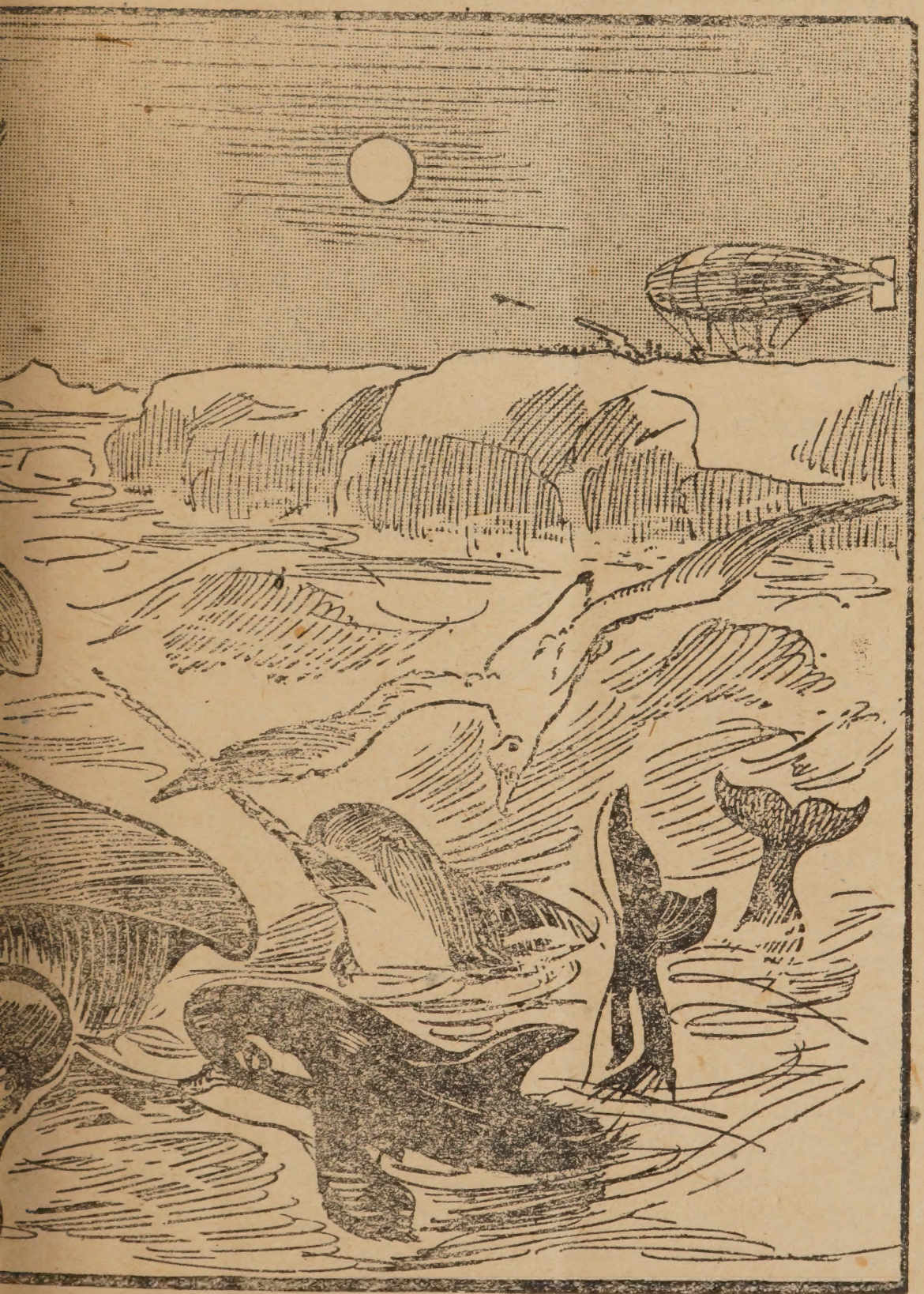
The Prince did as he was requested, and the pistol became like the biggest gun that was ever on a warship.

"Fetch out the spears!" ordered Budge; and the elves at once brought the weapons to him.

"Please touch these, too, your royal Highness," said the boy. "Make them long and thick and heavy."

It was no sooner said than done, and Budge placed one of the huge spears in the barrel of the gun,

THE WHALES WERE



RY SERIOUS TROUBLE.

which was pointing at the biggest whale. He ordered the trigger to be pulled, and the terrible harpoon passed right through the whale leader and killed it. Four more shots were fired, and three of the rebels were injured and put out of action. They at once disappeared and would take good care not to come again within reach of the gun. The other whales, too, drew off, but they intended to return to the attack as soon at it was dark, when Budge would no longer be able to take good aim at the enemy.

Prince Zoolog was loud in his praise of Budge, and he and the elf skipper examined the gun with the greatest interest. They declared that no fairy magic could have routed the foe in such fine style.

Really, the attack of the whales did the adventurers more good than harm, for Budge pointed out, that some blubber from the dead whale would give them the supply of oil that was needed for resuming the journey.

The elves were soon hard at work. They very cleverly threw ropes round the dead monster; which was then drawn to the side of the berg. Great strips of blubber were cut off, which the cook melted into oil, that was stored in barrels ready for future use.

It was decided to remain on the berg for the night, and a fresh start would be made as soon as it was light.

When night came on, the rebel whales stole quietly to the edge of the berg. The wretches got into position, and then, at the same moment, they gave the ice mighty cracks, each in a different place. They immediately sank out of sight, leaving not an inch of themselves at which to fire a shot.

Prince Zoolog and Budge did not know what to

do. If they could not use the gun, the airship would soon be in the water, and the whales would be able to smash it with a few blows of their huge tails.

The moon now broke through some clouds and made everything almost as light as day; and at the same moment there was a great flapping of wings and an awful screech, that made the twins almost jump out of their skins.

But there was no cause for fresh fear. Their old friend the albatross had arrived to say that help was at hand, for the greenstone ring had not been rubbed in vain.

The whales soon found out that they were in very serious trouble. Half-a-dozen grampuses, or killers, as many thresher sharks, and a couple of narwhals, had come to do battle for the fairy Prince, and they at once set about their work with a will.

A grampus is only about fifteen feet in length, while a big Greenlander is seventy feet; but the grampus has sharp teeth, while the whale has none, although its mouth is big enough to take in a boat and its crew of men. The loyal grampuses bit the whales right and left. The threshers lashed them with their tails. Each blow was worse than the slash of a whip, cutting off a whale a strip of blubber five feet in length. And all the time the narwhals were thrusting their spearlike tusks into the soft bodies of the giants.

In their pain and terror, the whales lashed the sea into great waves that set the iceberg rocking like a ship in a storm, that only died down when the monster rebels were dead and floating on the surface of the blood-stained water.

Although Prince Zoolog had not found his mother in the Arctic regions, he was pleased to know that

some of her rebel subjects had been taught some rather severe lessons.

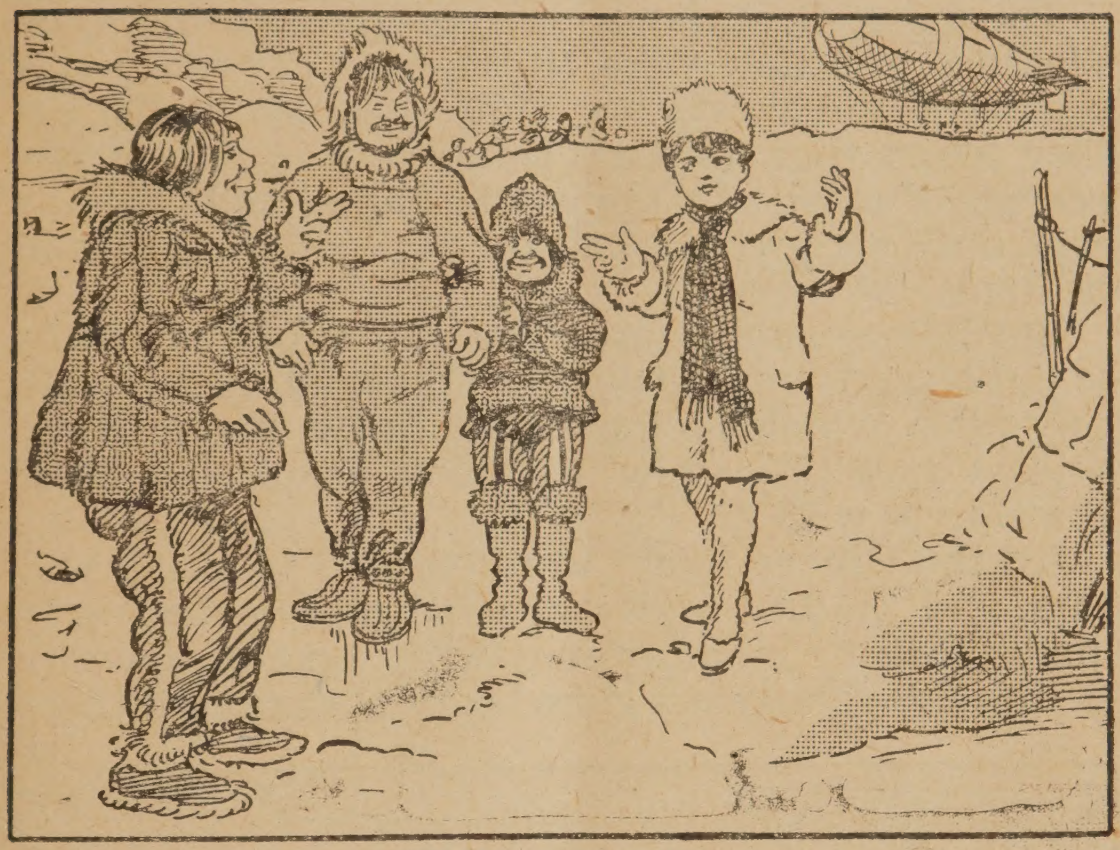
The loyal grampuses, sharks and narwhals remained on guard around the iceberg until daylight came, when the airship rose into the air, and once more set off further away from the home of the King of the Northern Blast.

On and on sailed the "King of the Air," until one day the Prince and the twins saw the first human beings on whom they had set eyes, since the good ship "Saucy Jane" had sailed into the frozen ocean.

At that time the airship was not very high, and thus could be seen quite plainly little huts made of blocks of ice, frozen together and lined with moss and skins. These were the dwellings of the Greenlanders, short, stunted people, who obtain a miserable living in that desolate part of the world by hunting and fishing. Their boats are only little canoes covered with sealskins, except for a hole in the centre, where the boatman sits to use his one paddle, with which he gets the boat through the roughest seas. For travelling on land, which is covered with snow for the greater part of the year, the people use sledges, drawn by reindeer, or by dogs.

The elves could see better than Budge and Betty, for the eyes of the little men were almost as good as telescopes. When passing over a Greenland village, the elf skipper said that he could see some men cutting up a dead reindeer. Prince Zoolog never ate the flesh of any creature, but he was not unmindful that very likely the twins would like to taste fresh meat for a change.

As Budge said that he and his sister would like a reindeer steak or cutlet, it was decided that the airship should land; and Budge should



BUDGE MADE SIGNS.

obtain some meat in exchange for some of the provisions that were stored in the car.

When Budge and Betty were leaving England, the fairy Prince had made them invisible to human eyes; but here in Greenland it would not matter, for the poor natives were very simple folks, who would not bother their heads about the twins being so far from home.

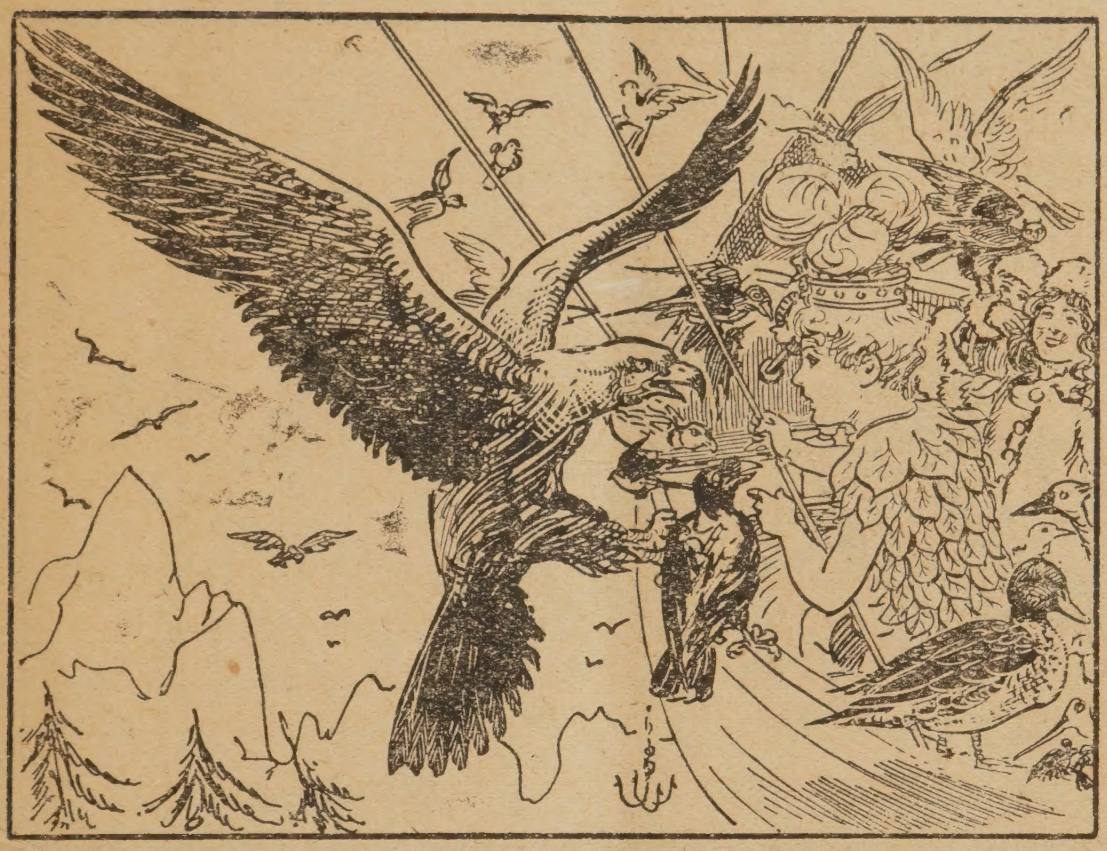
The airship came to rest quite close to the village, and the men, women and children crowded round to view the wonderful people who had dropped out of the sky. Budge stepped out of the car and made signs that he desired some meat; and in return he would give tea and sugar, which these people can never have, unless a whaling ship happens to call upon their coast.

The poor Greenlanders' eyes lighted up with pleasure, and they were all willing to go and kill a reindeer; and they were quite disappointed when they found that the strangers required only a few pounds of meat. Budge would have liked to make each native a present, but did not see how it was to be done.

But Prince Zoolog knew the way. He told Budge to put a small quantity of tea and sugar in separate tiny piles, which he touched with his magic ring; and at once they grew into great heaps that filled the natives with joy.

All the Greenlanders were dressed in skins and furs, and the little girls in particular looked very quaint. Betty made friends with some of them by giving the youngsters glass beads that caused them

BETTY MADE FRIENDS WITH THE YOUNGSTERS.



BIRDS OF DIFFERENT KINDS ALIGHTED ON THE AIRSHIP.

great delight. Their feet were covered with eider-down skins, with the soft, downy feathers on the inside; their leggings were of reindeer fur; and jacket of foxskin, with a hood to wear over the head. Altogether the young Greenlander looks very much like a stray white-bear cub.

In a short time the airship was very near the clouds again, and soon she was passing over Labrador, and the adventurers knew that they had left the frozen ocean behind them. In the kingdom where the Northern Blast blows his icy breath, there are no trees, nor even shrubs; but now that the airship began to sail over Canada vast forests came into view. For hundreds of miles there were trees that seemed as if they had no end.

Several times birds of different kinds alighted on

TWO ELKS WERE FIGHTING TO THE DEATH.

the airship, but not one of them could advise Prince Zoolog in what part of the world was he likely to find his royal mother. He was, however, pleased to learn that in Canada only a few of the elk, or moose, tribe had revolted against the Queen, and the brown bears had already killed all the rebels, except one old bull moose, who was of tremendous size and a terrible fighter.

The fairy Prince decided to drop to earth again to see if some friendly beast were better informed than the birds; and Budge would descend as soon as they came to a clearing in the forest, where the airship could be brought to rest in safety.

But when at last a likely spot was found, down beneath them the Prince and the twins saw two elks engaged in a fight to the death. One of them

THE ELVES DESCENDED THE ROPE.

was a giant creature; it was nearly nine feet high, and its shovel-shaped antlers were of great size, and hard as iron. The second beast was a much younger bull, and its antlers were not half-grown.

It was quite plain to the watchers up above, that the younger moose was engaged in the hopeless task of trying to kill the old rebel, who had defied even the bears. The fight could only end one way, for the loyalist could not last much longer against the fiercely kicking forefeet, and the strokes of the great antlers, that kept dealing out crashing blows

Prince Zoolog leant over and whispered in the ear of the elf skipper.

The twins wondered what was afoot, when the skipper ordered a dozen elves each to take a spear and follow him. Even as he spoke, he was dropping a long rope until one end of it reached the ground, and the other end was made fast to the car.

Almost as quick as lightning the elves were descending the rope. They sprang lightly to the ground and at once formed a circle around the two battling elks, who left each other to make fight against the little fellows. But the elf skipper spoke in language that the elks understood, and the younger one knew that he had nothing to fear.

The next instant the elves flung their spears at the old rebel, who sank to the ground, quite dead

Budge at once lowered the airship until the car was on the ground. Prince Zoolog addressed the young moose and thanked him for the gallant fight he had been making against such odds. The beast was pleased to hear the royal praise; and assured the Prince that he could count upon all living elks to fight against any enemies of Queen Zoolog.

But the elk knew nothing of her Majesty's whereabouts. She had been in that region a year

ago, and had left to pay a visit to the bighorns, or Rocky Mountain sheep.

Half-an-hour later Budge was steering the airship due west, and on the second day the snow-capped peaks of the Rocky Mountains could be seen towering up into the sky. It was, indeed, difficult to distinguish peak from cloud.

Sad to relate, Budge turned his head to speak to the elf skipper by his side. The fairy Prince shouted out a warning; Betty screamed another; for the airship was making straight for a jagged crag.

Budge awoke to the danger, but at that very moment the steering wheel stuck, and the airship crashed into the rock. The gas-bag was torn, and the gas exploded like a gun. For a few seconds the Prince, the twins, and the elves scarcely knew what

THE AIRSHIP CRASHED INTO THE ROCK.

THEY WERE FLUNG IN ALL DIRECTIONS.

had happened. They were flung in all directions, and lay here and there, scarcely certain for a moment whether they were dead or alive.

Only one thing was certain: the airship was a complete wreck. The "King of the Air" never again would soar up towards the blue sky.

The Prince and the twins were on the top of one of the peaks of the Rocky Mountains, and the question for them to decide was how to get out of their difficulty. At the moment their only thought was one of gladness that they were alive, thanks chiefly to the deep snow that lay on the mountains.

How the Prince and the twins continued their journey is told in the next little book, "By Bighorn Express."

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